

LOCAL / L.A. Now

Fast-moving brush fire burns in San Bernardino Mountains



Pilot fire burning above Silverwood Lake. (San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department)

By **Shelby Grad and Matt Hamilton**

AUGUST 7, 2016, 11:00 PM

A

fast-moving brush fire burned more than 1,500 acres Sunday near Silverwood Lake in San Bernardino County, triggering evacuations and road closures, authorities said.

The Pilot fire was first reported about 12 p.m. and quickly spread amid dry brush and timber, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

About 400 firefighters were battling the blaze by air and on the ground, according to the San Bernardino County Fire Department and U.S. Forest Service. Eight air tankers were deployed to help control the flames, fire officials said.

There is no containment at this time. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

The fire could be seen in a wide area of the mountains and surrounding communities, and evacuations were

ordered for those in the Summit Valley area east of Cedar Springs Dam, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

The American Red Cross opened an evacuation center at Ranchero Middle School in Hesperia. Pet owners can bring animals to the San Bernardino County Fairground, located in the 14800 block of 7th Street in Victorville.

A portion of Highway 138 was closed, and officials urged motorists to avoid the area. Highway 173 was also closed between Highway 138 and Arrowhead Lake Road.

The fire prompted the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District to issue a smoke advisory for Victor Valley and nearby communities, warning those with lung or heart disease as well as older adults and children to limit the amount of time spent outside.

Residents in the Central San Bernardino Mountains were also under a smoke advisory issued by the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

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UPDATES:

11 p.m.: This article was updated with more information about fire acreage and evacuations.

4:35 p.m.: This article was updated with details on the growth of the fire.

3:30 p.m.: This article was updated with additional details.

This article was originally published at 1:38 p.m.

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Pilot fire in San Bernardino County scorches 4,500 acres



The Pilot fire burns Sunday in San Bernardino County near Hesperia Lake. It was reported just after 12 p.m., and was burning in a sparsely populated area but not far from some homes in the Summit Valley area. (David Pardo / The Daily Press)

By **Brittney Mejia**

AUGUST 8, 2016, 8:00 AM

A

fire near Silverwood Lake in San Bernardino County has grown to 4,500 acres, with only 5% containment, officials said Monday.

The Pilot fire, first reported around 12 p.m. Sunday, spread quickly amid dry brush and timber, according to the U.S. Forest Service. Firefighters and bulldozers worked through the night building fire lines, said U.S. Forest Service spokesman Bob Poole.

“Because the vegetation is so incredibly dry, all it takes is a little spark and it’s just been chewing through it,” Poole said. “That’s been our difficulty.”

Evacuations remain in place for the Summit Valley area, east of Cedar Springs Dam. There has been no structural damage to homes, said Poole, who described the area as rural.

“

Because the vegetation is so incredibly dry, all it takes is a little spark and it's just been chewing through it.

— Bob Poole, U.S. Forest Service spokesman

There are about 400 firefighters on the fire, Poole said.

“Because of the aggressive attack by our firefighters, we were able to protect homes,” Poole said. “We did a lot of structure protection last night. These guys — they’re highly trained, they’re highly motivated and they’re doing an incredible job in difficult conditions.”

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

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There is a Red Cross evacuation center at Ranchero Middle School in Hesperia and pet owners can bring animals to the San Bernardino County Fairgrounds, in the 14800 block of 7th Street in Victorville.

Highway 173 is closed between State Route 138 and Arrowhead Lake Road.

The fire prompted a smoke advisory for Victor Valley and nearby communities, with the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District warning those with lung and heart disease as well as older adults and children to limit the amount of time spent outside.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District also issued a smoke advisory for residents in the central San Bernardino Mountains.

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Survey says: San Bernardino County is a very good place to live

By Neil Nisperos, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Saturday, August 6, 2016

SAN BERNARDINO >> County residents believe the region is a “very good” place to live, with the economy in excellent shape and a majority feeling they can trust elected officials, according to a new quality-of-life survey out of Cal State San Bernardino.

Crime, however, remains a worry, according to the report from the [Institute of Applied Research](#) and Policy Analysis.

The institute analyzes public opinion in San Bernardino County relative to the economy, quality of life, confidence in local politicians, commuting and crime, said Director [Barbara Sirotnik](#), a professor of statistics and supply chain management at Cal State San Bernardino. In April, the institute conducted a telephone survey of 1,187 residents randomly selected within San Bernardino County.

Crime and the fear of crime

With crime on the upswing in the county, the fear of being a victim has increased.

“I don’t know if that was partially an impact of the terrorist attacks, but fear of crime is up as is actual crime, so people aren’t responding in the abstract,” Sirotnik said. “They’re seeing a problem in the county and there are geographic differences. In Rancho Cucamonga, the fear is lower than cities like Highland or San Bernardino.”

San Bernardino County supervisor Curt Hagman believes a recent law that allows the release of low-level offenders to relieve prison overcrowding is partly to blame.

“Some of that is the state dumping their responsibility on local counties,” he said.

The report also found:

- Young people are more fearful than older people
- Females are more fearful than males
- Hispanics are more fearful than non-Hispanics
- People with higher incomes and education are less fearful than those with low or middle incomes

The number of residents who said the economy remained “excellent” or “good” continued to increase, but the figure hasn’t reached pre-Great Recession levels, according to the report.

“We get such a bad rap, but people feel it’s a good place to live,” Sirotnik said.

Resident sentiment over continued financial improvement continues on the upswing, according to the report. Younger people seem to feel more optimistic about their future finances than older people. Democrats and

Independents are more optimistic than Republicans. Renters are more optimistic than homeowners. Hispanics are more optimistic than non-Hispanics.

Age, location matter

Almost two-thirds of respondents said the county was a “very good” or “fairly good” place to live. Older residents rated the county higher than younger respondents. Resident said location and scenery were among the most positive qualities of living here, while crime and gang activity were the most negative.

Those feelings vary greatly, however, depending upon where in the nation’s largest county those respondents lived.

In San Bernardino, only 33.3 percent of people think they live in a good or fairly good place. But 96.6 percent of Chino Hills residents are happy with the county. Sirotnik said much of that difference may be influenced by the annual incomes in both cities. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the median family income in San Bernardino is \$38,774, compared to \$97,609 in Chino Hills

The power of politics

Sirotnik said 59 percent of respondents reported they had confidence in their local elected officials, but San Bernardino County figures remain below the national figure of 70 percent, according to Gallup.

“It is lower, but still given all the political corruption cases in the media for the Inland Empire, that’s not bad,” Sirotnik said.

State actions, Hagman said, may have made an impact on local government perception, “but overall we as elected officials are working hard to serve our residents of the county.

“I’m excited and super happy with the economy, and we’re working hard on that,” Hagman said.

The survey this year was supported by CSUSB, the Mojave Water Agency, the city of Rancho Cucamonga, Omnitrans, the city of San Bernardino and San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. Sponsors are able to use the data from the study toward their own work for county residents.

Staff writer Mark Muckenfuss contributed to this report.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160806/survey-says-san-bernardino-county-is-a-very-good-place-to-live>

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Fraud, dangerous practices alleged at San Bernardino health clinic

By Joe Nelson, The Sun

Saturday, August 6, 2016



SAN BERNARDINO >> In the past three years, more than half a dozen people have come forward with allegations that a nonprofit San Bernardino health clinic falsified patient data and overprescribed painkillers to patients in order to increase its government funding.

In a series of lawsuits filed in San Bernardino Superior Court between October 2013 and May 24, seven former employees of [Inland Behavioral and Health Services Inc.](#) allege they were fired or forced to resign after reporting the alleged practices to CEO [Temetry Lindsey](#), who has run the health center since 1986. They described a highly dysfunctional work environment where Lindsey ruled with an iron

fist, firing anybody who dared question her practices, or made working conditions so unbearable they were forced to quit.

“It was hell working there. You never knew what war you were walking into every day,” said Barbette “Bobbie” Barton, Lindsey’s former personal assistant of 13 years and one of the plaintiffs who sued.

Barton alleges she was stripped of her duties and forced to resign in retaliation for her daughter-in-law, former clerical supervisor Maribel Chanon, suing IBHS in October 2013. Chanon alleged she was fired for trying to discipline Lindsey’s daughter, Samantha Dotson, and lead receptionist Bonita Brown for harassing another employee, receptionist Otilia Monreal.

Monreal, a Latina, ended up quitting over the incident and suing IBHS in March 2014, alleging racial and gender discrimination. Her lawsuit, however, was dismissed last year because it was filed after the one-year statute of limitations to file had expired, said Tristan Pelayes, the Riverside attorney who represents Monreal and the seven other plaintiffs.

Discrimination

In addition to allegations of fraud and overprescribing medication to patients, nearly half the lawsuits allege IBHS fostered a workplace culture rife with racially divisive office politics, where Latinos were discriminated against, blacks were given preferential treatment, and where Lindsey routinely hired family and friends to work at the clinic or serve on its board of directors.

Monreal alleged in her lawsuit she was constantly subjected to racially charged insults by Brown and other staff, which Lindsey condoned. Brown and Dotson, according to Monreal’s lawsuit, threw her personal belongings under her desk while she was away so that when she returned to pick them up, two male employees could look up her dress. When Chanon tried disciplining the two for that incident, she was retaliated against by Lindsey and Dotson and ultimately fired, according to Chanon’s lawsuit.

Another former employee alleged Lindsey ordered a nursing supervisor to remove the chairs from the nurses’ desks because they were “lazy,” forcing them to work at their desks standing up or on their knees.

IBHS Chief Counsel Lawrence Yang declined to comment on the allegations, citing ongoing litigation.

Through Yang, Lindsey declined to comment for this report.

Long history

Founded in 1978, IBHS is a federally certified and state licensed health center that provides medical, dental and mental health services to economically disadvantaged residents. It has three locations in the city of San Bernardino and one in Banning. The nonprofit has contracted with San Bernardino County for roughly 20 years and currently has three contracts with the county totaling \$4.7 million for drug- and alcohol-abuse treatment.

County spokesman David Wert said the county was unaware of the spate of litigation against the clinic in the past three years. He said County Counsel is now meeting with the heads of county departments that have a relationship with IBHS.

“The county is reviewing its relationship with the vendor and, if necessary, will take action to ensure services provided on the county’s behalf are done so in a responsible manner,” Wert said.

Lindsey of Yucaipa has received numerous commendations from local, state and national organizations over the years for her work and service to the community. Under her leadership, IBHS grew from one to four locations and now employs 150 people. The clinic serves more than 12,000 patients annually.

Litigation

Barton, Chanon and two other plaintiffs — former clinic physician Tiffany Hill and supervising LVN Jennifer Rossi — resolved their lawsuits out of court. Two other lawsuits remain ongoing, Pelayes said.

The seventh plaintiff, former clinic manager Teecha Chamblee, took her case to trial and prevailed.

On July 13, a [jury awarded her \\$50,000](#), \$22,500 of which was in punitive damages. The jury found Chamblee, who worked for the clinic 11 months, was retaliated against and forced to resign for refusing to participate in activities she felt were illegal, and that IBHS acted with “malice, fraud and oppression,” court records show.

Yang said Chamblee sought roughly \$750,000 in damages at trial, but the jury only awarded her \$50,000. He declined to comment on the allegations and verdict, saying the case is still ongoing.

“We are continuing to evaluate our legal options with respect to the jury verdict,” Yang said in a recent telephone interview. “Additionally, the issue of attorney’s fees is still being litigated.”

On Thursday, Pelayes said he filed a motion in court demanding \$850,000 in attorney’s fees from IBHS for the monthlong trial.

Yang declined to comment on the other lawsuits, but issued the following statement: “With respect to the recent lawsuits filed against it, IBHS notes that it has served the community for nearly 40 years, and that the recent lawsuits appear to be concentrated within the last three years, with several of them brought by a single plaintiff’s attorney. Out of respect for the ongoing legal process and for all parties involved in that process, IBHS has no further comment regarding these lawsuits at this time.”

Pelayes said two former X-ray technicians who were fired from the clinic after demanding a radiation safety officer be hired have also come forward alleging wrongful termination. He said he plans to file lawsuits on their behalf in the next 60 days.

Data reporting

Lindsey and other top administrators at the clinic worked in cahoots to falsify patient and clinic measure data reported annually to the federal Health Resources and Services Administration, or HRSA, which administers grants to health clinics nationwide providing services to underserved populations, the lawsuits allege.

Chamblee, who worked at IBHS for 11 months before resigning, alleged she was demoted, banned from staff meetings and shunned by Lindsey after reporting activity she felt was illegal, including the calculation of food stamps as income, which inflated patient incomes and allowed the clinic to charge higher fees for their care. She also alleged the clinic was charging patients for visits already covered by local and state programs, as well as “no show” fees for patients who missed appointments.

Anais Parsaeian, an LVN who worked for IBHS for 16 months before resigning in June 2014, alleges in her lawsuit that Lindsey made her collect random patient files in order to compile patient data for clinic measure reports, which are submitted every February to HRSA, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

On one occasion, Parsaeian randomly selected 70 patient files for Lindsey, who rejected all of them because the sampling did not produce the desired outcome. Parsaeian repeated the process four more times, and Lindsey rejected the other four samplings as well, ultimately using an Excel spreadsheet to generate the desired data, according to Parsaeian’s lawsuit.

Parsaeian also alleges Lindsey submitted fraudulent data to the Joint Commission in order for IBHS to receive accreditation and certification.

HRSA spokesman Martin Kramer said he could not comment on the IBHS matter, but did say the federal agency monitors its grantees throughout the year to identify potential issues by reviewing data reports, conducting independent audits and conducting site visits, among other things.

“Our goal is always to ensure the community that the health center serves has access to high quality medical care. However, HRSA can ultimately disapprove future health center grant applications and/or move to discontinue current HRSA funding,” Kramer said.

Spotty record

Among the most serious allegations against IBHS are that its medical director of 19 years, Donald Underwood, failed to properly maintain patient medical charts and overprescribed painkillers and other medications to patients, including a 12-year-old girl with diabetes.

Underwood’s medical license was revoked or suspended in five states in the 1980s for “gross negligence,” “gross incompetence” and “dishonest acts” for overprescribing medication to patients and allowing nurses to perform surgical procedures on patients at his hair restoration clinics in New York, according to medical board records on file in those states: New York, New Jersey, Florida, Indiana and Ohio.

Underwood has worked for IBHS since June 1997. He came to California in the 1990s, and his probation was lifted on June 19, 1995, when he was granted an unrestricted license to practice medicine again, according to records on file with the Osteopathic Medical Board of California.

Two years later, Underwood began working at IBHS.

In a joint lawsuit filed in June 2014, former clinic physician Tiffany Hill and supervising LVN Jennifer Rossi alleged they were both fired in March 2013 after bringing a number of concerns to Lindsey and other IBHS staff, including Underwood’s prescription practices, the unauthorized practice of medicine by medical assistants and training deficiencies among nursing staff, among other things.

While helping Underwood complete his patient charts in February 2013, Rossi claimed she uncovered a pattern of potentially dangerous prescriptions for painkillers written by Underwood to patients, including a 12-year-old

girl with diabetes, her lawsuit alleges.

In an email from Hill to Lindsey dated Nov. 10, 2012, Hill brought a number of concerns to Lindsey's attention, mainly about Underwood.

"Dr. Underwood scares the crap out of me," Hill wrote in her email, complaining that Underwood was giving steroid injections to diabetic patients without checking their labs. "(Underwood) is a liability. To be completely honest, I don't want my name on any of his charts because they call everyone in for the lawsuits."

In February 2013, Rossi informed Lindsey via email that one of Underwood's patients had been prescribed hundreds of painkillers and psychotropic medications, including 485 hydrocodone, 830 Tramadol, 330 Xanax and 270 Valium. Rossi informed Lindsey the patient was receiving prescriptions for the same medications from other physicians outside the clinic.

A month later, Hill and Rossi were fired.

Underwood overprescribed painkillers to patients to ensure they would return to the clinic time and time again, keeping patient numbers high and consistent, which affected the health center's state and federal funding, Pelayes said.

Through Yang, Underwood declined to comment for this report.

Since Underwood's probation was lifted in California in 1995, no complaints have been filed against him with the Osteopathic Medical Board, executive director Angelina Burton said.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160806/fraud-dangerous-practices-alleged-at-san-bernardino-health-clinic>

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San Bernardino County Museum's next focus: the public

By [KRISTINA HERNANDEZ](#)

2016-08-05 18:08:09



REDLANDS – Nearly 10 months into Melissa Russo's tenure as director of the San Bernardino County Museum, changes meant to energize and strengthen the facility continue.

As part of this effort, the museum is in the process of filling four key positions – curators of biology, earth sciences and visitor engagement and exhibits, as well as coordinator of museum education.

"In the past the curators were focused on research and collections, and for 65 years we had the museum be a collecting and research institution," Russo explained. "What we're focused on for the future is how we take

those collections and make them available and accessible and engaging to the public."

The museum's ability to add staff is due in part to an upswing in San Bernardino County's economy and increased financial stability, and is supported by the Board of Supervisors' Countywide Vision, which seeks to enhance the arts, culture and education in the county.

"When the board set the goal to revitalize the county museum, we envisioned a fiscally healthy institution that could once again compete with other local museums," said James Ramos, Board of Supervisors chairman. Ramos represents the 3rd District, which includes Redlands and the museum.

"We are very pleased with the progress that has been made," Ramos added, "and know that the museum is moving in the right direction to become a great facility where our community can go for a deeper understanding of our regional culture and natural history."

Since her hiring in October, Russo has worked with museum staff to create new exhibits and educational opportunities to attract visitors. The museum hosted its first Star Wars-themed dance party May 4 and opened its newest exhibit, "Mastadon! Prehistoric Elephants in the Southwest," in June, and launched a Summer Movies at the Museum series.

The series continues 7 p.m. Friday with a screening of "The Princess Bride" at the museum, 2024 N. Orange Tree Lane.

Other ideas are in the works.

The museum plans to continue work on its Hall of Geological Wonders, develop more STEM-based educational activities for younger visitors and, over the next few months, develop a strategic and interpretive plan.

"That's going to give us a good idea of what the museum can best achieve given our collections and what the community really needs," Russo said. "We want to continue using our current collections but framing them in a different way."

Meanwhile, the new staff members are expected to join the museum next month, and the museum plans to hire a curator of science in the future.

"We want to be more productive in collecting the artifacts and history of the midcentury in San Bernardino

County, and what's going on currently," Russo said. "For years we've been the community's attic in a sense, and what we want to become is the community's front porch."

Contact the writer: khernandez@scng.com; @TheFactsKris on Twitter

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

San Bernardino County supervisor's push to ban raves reignited by Fontana deaths

By Joe Nelson, The Sun

Saturday, August 6, 2016



The [recent deaths of three people](#) at the HARD Summer Music Festival in Fontana reignited a push by San Bernardino County Supervisor Janice Rutherford to ban raves at the San Manuel Amphitheater in Devore.

Officials at Auto Club Speedway, in unincorporated Fontana, and Live Nation have remained silent since the deaths of Derek Lee, 22, of San Francisco, Alyssa Dominguez, 21, of San Diego and Roxanne Ngo, 22, of Chino Hills, following last weekend's event. Their causes of death remain under investigation and appear unrelated, authorities said.

In a statement released Friday, Rutherford said that while the causes of death have yet to be determined, it is common knowledge that many young people die at electronic dance shows due to overdoses.

"In light of these recent deaths, the Board of Supervisors should seriously consider banning these events from taking place at the county-owned San Manuel Amphitheater in Devore. We cannot wait for more young lives to be lost before we decide enough is enough," Rutherford said.

Rutherford plans to discuss the matter with her fellow county supervisors during Tuesday's board meeting.

Despite two deaths since 2013 and hundreds of complaints from area residents about excessive noise, loitering, drug use and heavy traffic generated by the Nocturnal Wonderland electronic dance show and its sister events at the San Manuel Amphitheater, Rutherford's measure to terminate the county's contract with Live Nation failed [June 28 due to lack of board consensus](#) when Supervisors Josie Gonzales and board chairman James Ramos did not show for the meeting. Supervisor Curt Hagman was against terminating the contract, saying revenue generated from the raves helps fund other county parks and infrastructure.

Another rave, Insomniac's Nocturnal Wonderland, is scheduled for Labor Day Weekend at San Manuel Amphitheater.

Autopsies on Lee, Dominguez and Ngo were completed Thursday and toxicology tests were taken, said Capt. Kevin Lacy of the San Bernardino County coroner's office on Friday. He could not say how long it would take for toxicology results or the causes of death to be determined.

HARD Summer spokeswoman Alexandra Greenberg declined to comment on what action the promoter was taking in response to the deaths.

"We were deeply saddened to learn about the deaths of three people who attended the festival this weekend," Greenberg said in a statement. "Our sincerest thoughts and condolences are with their family and friends."

Auto Club Speedway President Dave Allen and spokesman David Talley did not respond to repeated requests

for comment.

Live Nation spokesman Victor Trevino also did not respond to repeated telephone calls seeking comment.

The three deaths at the Fontana festival bring the total number of people who have died at the HARD Summer Music Festival to six since 2013. Jonathan Reyes, 21, of Rosemead died after taking the drug Ecstasy at the festival in 2013 at the Los Angeles State Historical Park. Last August, Katie Dix, 19, of Camarillo and Tracy Nguyen, 18, of West Covina [died of drug overdoses](#) after attending the event at the Pomona Fairplex.

The deaths of Dix and Nguyen in Pomona last year prompted Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis to [call for a ban](#) on raves in the county. In March, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors stopped short of imposing a ban on raves, instead [adopting an ordinance](#) calling for a case-by-case threat assessment of events, including raves, expected to draw 10,000 or more people on county property or in unincorporated areas.

In April, HARD Summer promoters announced the event would be [moving to Fontana](#) this year. More than 146,000 people attended last weekend's event, where police arrested 325 people, most for narcotics-related offenses, San Bernardino County sheriff's spokeswoman Cindy Bachman said.

Solis said she was deeply saddened by the news of the most recent rave deaths in Fontana.

"I extend my deepest condolences to the families and friends of these victims," Solis said in a statement. "We hope that tragedies such as these can be prevented in the future."

Solis said the county's new threat-assessment ordinance for events drawing 10,000 or more people was prompted by a recommendation from the county's Electronic Music Festival Task Force formed in September in response to the deaths of Dix and Nguyen and the hospitalization of dozens of others at the Pomona Fairplex last August.

San Bernardino County is now following Los Angeles County's lead. At the June 28 San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors meeting, the [board directed staff](#) to draft an agenda item proposing the creation of a rave task force similar to the one in Los Angeles County.

But Los Angeles County has also modeled some of its measures after San Bernardino County's efforts, San Bernardino County spokesman David Wert said.

"When Los Angeles County decided to adopt measures to make these types of events as drug-free as possible in their county, they simply adopted the measures that have been in place at San Manuel (Amphitheater) since the first (electronic dance music) event took place there," Wert said in an email. "Those measures include surrender bins, which patrons actually use; mandatory ID scans so that drug offenders and anyone with arrest warrants can be denied entry; and a heavy presence of uniformed and undercover law enforcement, all in addition to the usual regimen of searches upon entry."

Since 2013, when the San Manuel Amphitheater began hosting electronic dance shows, two people died from drug overdoses after attending the events. Arrel Cochon, 22, of Hollywood died after attending the inaugural Nocturnal Wonderland event in 2013, and John Hoang Dinh Vo, 22, of San Diego died after attending the Beyond Wonderland event in March last year.

Live Nation's contract, which allows the entertainment company to host up to four electronic dance shows a year at San Manuel Amphitheater, expires in October.

"Devore residents are subjected to window-rattling noise until 2 a.m., drugged out young people wandering through their yards, and intense traffic for entire weekends when the San Manuel Amphitheater hosts these events," Rutherford said in her statement Friday. "The short-term economic benefits of these events do not outweigh the impacts they have on Devore residents, and they certainly do not warrant putting more young lives at risk."

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Supervisors should stop the Soda Mountain Solar Project: Guest commentary

By Rebecca Unger

Friday, August 5, 2016



Over the last eight years, communities throughout the California desert have seen renewable energy projects consistently sited in the wrong places where they harm businesses, homeowners, iconic desert species and our national parks, which serve as powerful economic engines.

That's why the Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce opposes the Soda Mountain Solar Project. The project would undermine the regional tourism-based economy, county interests, local communities, and the spirit and letter of our own county renewable energy ordinance.

Importantly, it's just another example of poor federal decision making

— and something our San Bernardino County supervisors need to put right.

The Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce's mission is to support and promote our community and Joshua Tree National Park as an international tourist attraction and natural wonder; to foster and encourage commerce and economic development while maintaining a respectful balance and enduring harmony with our natural environment; and to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors of Joshua Tree through the development and support of the cultural arts and community activities.

Our chamber represents a diverse array of businesses in the community of Joshua Tree, which is Joshua Tree National Park's most visible and widely known gateway community. It is renowned for its stunning scenery, dark night skies, abundant recreational opportunities, unique local businesses and a vibrant arts community.

The Soda Mountain Solar Project would irrevocably harm the biological and visual resources of the Mojave National Preserve, Joshua Tree's sister park and the lower 48 states' third-largest national park unit. As a chamber of commerce that serves as gateway to Joshua Tree National Park, we've become increasingly aware that tourists who spend time at Joshua Tree National Park often spend time at multiple national parks and attractions throughout the California desert.

These road-tripping visitors expect pristine conditions in our national park units like Joshua Tree and the Mojave National Preserve — dark skies, abundant wildlife and stunning scenic vistas. Ironically, these are the very things that would be irrevocably harmed in the Mojave National Preserve by the Soda Mountain Solar Project. Keep in mind that both Joshua Tree and the Mojave National Preserve are powerful economic engines for our California desert region. In fact, in 2015 there were more than 2.5 million visitors to Joshua Tree National Park and the Mojave National Preserve who spent over \$120 million in communities surrounding these parks and supported almost 1,800 full- and part-time jobs. The bottom line is that there is a direct connection between protecting these treasured lands and raising the profile of the California desert as world-class tourist destination.

To add insult to injury, if this project were on county or private land it simply wouldn't be approved. Our current renewable energy ordinance contains language protecting critical wildlife corridors and states that the scenic vistas from hiking and backcountry areas within the preserve are protected within a two-mile buffer zone.

Thousands of county residents, local organizations, businesses, scientists, recreation groups, gateway communities and the National Park Service have spoken out against the Soda Mountain Solar Project. Even the city of Los Angeles, hardly considered to be environmentally driven, has refused to buy power from the project because of the ecological harm it would cause.

Despite this overwhelming public outcry, national coverage of this issue and known significant harm to county and community resources, federal land managers continue to force our hand and demand the county and its residents accept this project. We urge the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors to reject the well permit and not allow the project to move forward under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Rebecca Unger is president of the Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/opinion/20160805/supervisors-should-stop-the-soda-mountain-solar-project-guest-commentary>

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Counties accused of profiting from jail call kickbacks



Inmates calling from jail

Friday, Aug 05, 2016

By S. E. Williams A class action lawsuit has been filed against San Bernardino, Orange and Riverside Counties over an alleged kick-back scheme involving telephone calls from jails.

The suit not only brings a challenge to the high cost of jail calls, it claims the involved counties have allegedly turned a blind eye on the exorbitantly high prices charged by the phone companies because of the kick-backs they purportedly receive from the companies who provide the services.

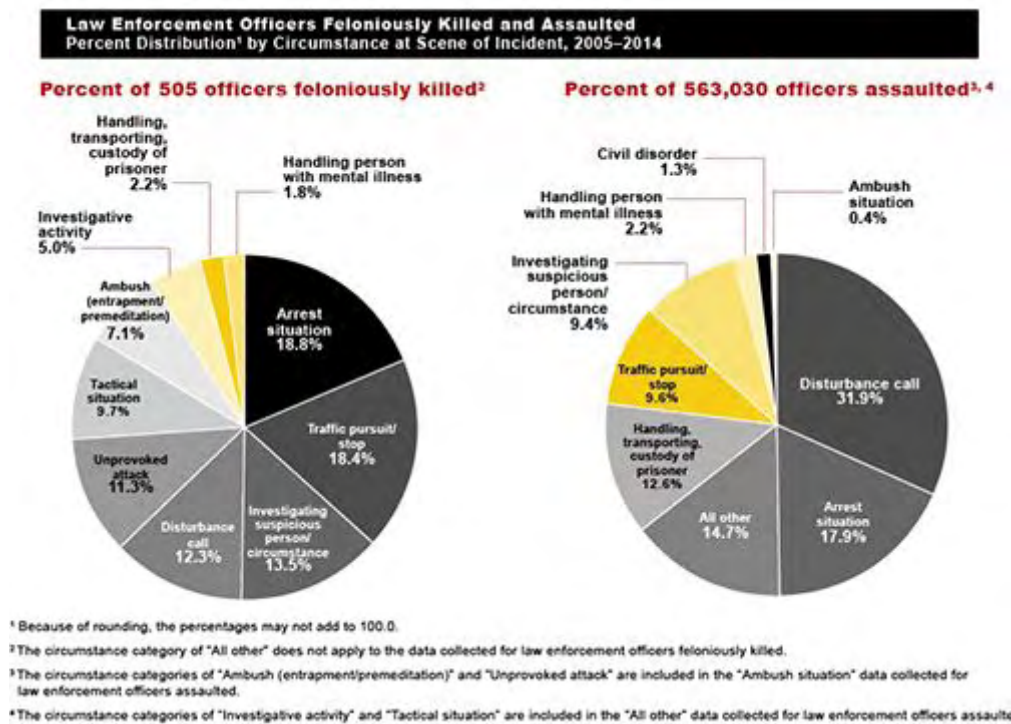
This accusation is based on the reality that counties control the telephone contracts for jails within their jurisdictions and as a result, have the ability to negotiate better rates. It appears that rather than negotiate for lower costs and reduced fees, jail call rates have remained high and in the process added increased revenue to county coffers. While at the same time, the high costs of the calls are passed along to unsuspecting family members and friends of the incarcerated. These individuals pay the exorbitant fees to keep communications open between themselves and their loved ones. Although the fees can vary, most consider the rates unreasonable. Over time, counties have purportedly earned millions of dollars from these jail call charges.

As America's prison industrial complex continues to draw more and more attention, in light of the nation's increased focus on the need for criminal justice reform, this is just another example of a system many complain is rigged with injustice.

The state of California has already taken steps to correct this at the state level. It recently set a new example for its counties to consider, in regards to jail cell calls, when it joined several other states and lowered the costs of calls in their state prisons. They did so by making it illegal for the state prisons to accept payments from phone companies. In addition, county jails across the nation were ordered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to cap rates and reduce fees of jail calls in June.

The FCC order has now capped jailhouse calls at 16 cents per minute; limited deposit fees to three dollars for online service and six dollars for phone service. In addition, all other fees are now forbidden. If the class action lawsuit is successful, it could result in the refund of millions of dollars in over-charged fees to families and friends of inmates gouged by phone companies with the tacit approval of county officials. However, customers will not be the only group impacted—at the same time, county governments stand to lose millions of dollars in revenue. *The Alpenhorn News will continue to follow this story.*

Exclusive interview Sheriff John McMahon



Law Enforcement Officers Feloniously Killed and Assaulted

Friday, Jul 29, 2016

Police assassinations, training and community outreach

By S. E. Williams This week, in an exclusive interview with *The Alpenhorn News*, San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon spoke openly about the recent rash of police assassinations and his department's commitment to maintain an open dialogue with members of the community. The recent assassinations of police officers in Texas and Louisiana, by misguided individuals, who claimed retaliation for the mistreatment and questionable deaths of Black people at the hands of those sworn to protect and serve them, has raised the stakes in a national quest for criminal justice reform. The pursuit has the potential to either perpetuate tensions or expand meaningful dialogue conducive to change. Activist groups at the forefront of the push for change, like the Black Lives Matter movement, and police organizations, that grapple with daily incidents of violence, stretched resources and growing concerns about snipers—each view the concerns of the other through prisms shaped by their own experiences and, at times, appear to have reached a stalemate. Yet, recent events that include the sniper attacks on police and the questionable deaths of Black men at the hands of officers in Minnesota and Louisiana has forced Americans to seek a purposeful way forward with a greater sense of urgency. Many are convinced the effort must begin at the local level. When asked to comment on these devastating events, McMahon stated, "The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is deeply saddened by the senseless attacks upon law enforcement officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge," and continued. "Our hearts and prayers go out to their families, friends and communities during this tragic time." McMahon stressed the value of training in the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department when asked about concerns for the safety of local officers in the wake of the recent attacks, "Deputies receive ongoing training in defensive tactics, to include

weaponless defense, less lethal options, up to lethal force options. Training is recurrent and is in line with industry standards. The department strives to provide our deputies with the best modern training available.” According to McMahon, law enforcement has become extremely complex and deputies have to be prepared to make routine contacts, contacts with the mentally ill, and to respond to terrorism. “Deputy’s safety is paramount,” he stressed. “We will continue to provide the best possible training and equipment to ensure our staff and the public is safe.” Community policing has been heralded by many as the way forward to help bridge the gap and strengthen communications between officers and the citizens they serve. Most citizens are sincerely concerned about the safety of officers and want to do their part to keep the officers and the community safe. “We ask the public to join us and do their part in helping to keep our communities safe with the officers who serve them,” McMahon stressed. He asked citizens to be aware of their surroundings. “If you see something that could create danger to our communities or our officers, call 911 immediately,” he advised. The sheriff also sought to dispel concerns, expressed by some in the community, that recent attacks on officers could slow response times to 911 calls out of an abundance of caution for their own safety. Some fear this could leave members of the community at risk. McMahon stressed that department members will continue to remain extremely vigilant, while providing professional law enforcement services, to their communities. “The safety of the residents, as well as the safety of all law enforcement officials, remains our top priority,” he said. McMahon encouraged members of the community to reach out, talk with and support law enforcement officers from all agencies. He also encouraged area residents to get involved with their local law enforcement agency. “There are several volunteer programs offered to community members. Such as Citizens On Patrol, Explorer Scouts, Search and Rescue and the YANA (You are Not Alone) Program, just to name a few.” In addition to community policing and other outreach efforts related to building better relationships between officers and the citizens they serve, is the need for local agencies to more closely resemble the makeup of their communities. According to a national report released last August, ‘Diversity on the force: Where police don’t mirror communities,’ many police agencies have actually lost ground over the last 25 years in this regard. Included among communities in the nation with the greatest disparities in diversity between the police and the communities they serve are the cities of Fontana, Ontario, Rialto and San Bernardino.

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Hagman to host Frontier Communications Service Day

Hagman to host Frontier Communications Service Day

Sunday, August 7, 2016

San Bernardino County Supervisor Curt Hagman, in partnership with Frontier Communications, is inviting residents experiencing service issues to register for the Frontier Face-to-Face Customer Service Day on Aug. 18 at Chino Hills City Hall.

In July, Frontier representatives were invited to Chino Hills by Hagman — who represents the Fourth District — to discuss solutions to concerns received by the supervisor's office since the transition took place earlier this year. Frontier Vice President Michael Towne worked together with Hagman's staff to schedule the event with local residents.

“San Bernardino County appreciates the response to build good will in the community from Frontier Communications and Vice President Mike Towne,” Hagman said.

Towne said Frontier is committed to sorting out the service or billing issues customers have had.

Service appointments can be reserved through Hagman's website www.sbcounty.gov/bosd4 or by calling 909-465-5273. Appointment times on Aug. 18 will begin at 10 a.m. and close at 2 p.m.

Customers are advised to arrive at their scheduled appointment time to the Community Room at City Hall, 14000 City Center Dr., Chino Hills.

— *From staff reports*

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/business/20160807/hagman-to-host-frontier-communications-service-day>

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LOCAL / Education

San Bernardino County reaches resolution with federal government over disabled students

By **Joy Resmovits**

AUGUST 5, 2016, 5:25 PM

San Bernardino County has reached an [agreement](#) with the federal government after an investigation found that it violated federal law by not having a system in place to identify students with disabilities in the community and juvenile court schools it manages.

The county has agreed to develop a process for identifying students with suspected disabilities and providing them with services tailored to their needs. It will hire a project manager to create an “action plan” to fix problems, create a system for monitoring special education and review the educational plans of students with disabilities.

“We found in the investigation that in fact the county did not have an effective data tracking system to ensure that students would be identified or evaluated for disabilities,” said Catherine Lhamon, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, which began a compliance review of the county in 2014. “I am very pleased with the county’s willingness to do right by its students.”

San Bernardino County manages two juvenile court schools that teach young people while they’re detained or incarcerated. It also has 14 “community,” or alternative, schools, where students are sent following expulsion or truancy. In the 2013-2014 school year, 645 students attended the community schools and 238 were in court schools.

The government review also concluded that the county has been determining the services students with disabilities received with an eye to saving money, not to meeting individual needs.

“We saw that the county routinely reduced the number of service minutes for students who had in their prior educational settings received more minutes of support,” Lhamon said.

Investigators learned about this issue by looking at student records. They found that most students’ files contained exactly the same language to explain why their hours had been reduced — stating that 120 minutes of services “will be sufficient to insure that the student has the opportunity to succeed in the classroom.”

Once a student was identified for evaluation, the government found, there was so much paperwork that often by the time a psychologist was prepared to evaluate him, he had already cycled out of the school.

San Bernardino County School Superintendent Theodore Alejandre was not immediately available for comment, but Lhamon praised the county for being cooperative and for starting to train teachers and address

its problems before the investigation ended.

You can reach Joy Resmovits on Twitter [@Joy_Resmovits](#) and by email at Joy.Resmovits@LATimes.com.

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

How an Inland duo plan to save San Bernardino's iconic arrowhead

By Cassie MacDuff, The Press-Enterprise

Saturday, August 6, 2016



Riverside has its iconic raincross, the stylized bell inside a trapezoid topped with the Native American symbol for the dragonfly.

Instantly recognizable, the raincross is Riverside's acknowledged brand.

Likewise, San Bernardino has its arrowhead, taken from a geologic formation etched on a hillside above the town.

San Bernardino County adopted the arrowhead years ago as its brand, as widely known as Riverside's raincross.

And like the dragonfly symbol atop the raincross, the arrowhead also is the stuff of Indian lore.

Cahuilla legend has it that the tribe followed a giant arrow streaking westward across the sky to its landing spot on the hillside where it pointed the travelers to a natural hot springs that would soothe their weary muscles.

In the 1880s a white man, equally fascinated with the arrowhead on the hillside, followed it to the bubbling waters and built the Arrowhead Springs Hotel below it.

Over the centuries, wildfires ravaged the landscape, causing erosion that threatened the perfect symmetry of the natural arrowhead. The west upper angle was slipping away.

That grabbed the attention of San Bernardino native Jack Brown, executive chairman of Stater Bros. Brown decided he didn't want to let the symbol of his hometown disappear.

On the 50th anniversary of the supermarket chain, Brown — with Riverside lawyer Bruce Varner — established Friends of the Arrowhead Inc., a nonprofit to fund U.S. Forest Service efforts to halt the erosion and replant the outline of the arrowhead to keep it visible from the valley floor.

Friends of the Arrowhead also built a viewing spot at the north end of San Bernardino's Wildwood Park and installed plaques detailing the Cahuilla and Guachama legends, and the history of the city that came to be in the valley below it.

The hillside last burned in 2002. And although successive wildfires and droughts have opened up similar arrowhead-shaped slumps elsewhere on the mountain, the arrowhead above San Bernardino remains an identifiable landmark.

Now, Brown wants to get the arrowhead designated as a historic monument or landmark. That might involve getting it on the California Register of Historical Resources or the National Register of Historic Places.

Brown has spoken with San Bernardino County Supervisor James Ramos, a member of the San Manuel Band of

Mission Indians, about getting the county's help with the designation process.

Ramos said county legislative staff is exploring the options. It may need to be a national designation, since the majority of the arrowhead's 7.5 acres is on National Forest land.

"We're looking at all the avenues," Ramos said, adding, "It's not a simple process."

In addition, Brown and Varner are renewing the Friends of the Arrowhead's efforts to maintain the landmark and the viewing site in Wildwood Park, which has been vandalized in recent years.

They are working with the Native Sons of the Golden West, whose mission is preserving the region's history.

The relationship is still in the formative stage, but Brown hopes the Native Sons will take up the job of cleaning up and maintaining the viewing site and working with the Forest Service to preserve and maintain the arrowhead itself longterm.

Working on the landmark is not an easy task, former Forest Service biologist Steve Loe told me.

"It's very, very steep terrain," Loe said. That makes it treacherous for work crews.

The only access across Forest Service land is from an unmarked USFS road and involves a two-mile hike downhill, carrying whatever tools are necessary.

There is easier access off the Arrowhead Springs resort property, Loe said. The arrowhead landmark overlaps the resort property on its lower end, with about 10 percent on private property.

The San Manuel tribe purchased the property last spring. I asked Ramos whether the tribe would allow access for work crews and/or support the effort to maintain the arrowhead. He said that's a question for the tribal government. I didn't hear back from the tribe by deadline Friday.

Brown and Ramos each separately hailed the purchase of the resort by the tribe as a perfect fit.

The land with its hot springs is a central part of the San Manuel's cultural heritage, Ramos said, and regaining historic tribal sites honors the sacrifices the elders made over the centuries.

In the Cahuilla myth, the arrow that created the hillside feature was shot from the San Jacinto Mountains, Ramos said. In Serrano myth, a giant snake lived in the water of the hot spring, and those who bathed in it for healing were to take nothing from the spring – no stone, no rock, nothing, Ramos said.

In a July 27 letter to the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, Brown offered Stater Bros.' support for maintaining the arrowhead and other county projects to preserve regional heritage.

If you want to see the arrowhead from the viewing spot built by the Friends, drive north on Waterman Avenue past 40th Street and watch for the driveway to the Little League field on the right, at the north end of Wildwood Park.

If you'd like to help preserve the arrowhead or contribute to the maintenance fund, contact Bruce Varner at 951-274-7777.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20160806/how-an-inland-duo-plan-to-save-san-bernardinos-iconic-arrowhead>

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Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

Where to find the cheapest flights in Southern California? Not in Ontario

By Courtney Tompkins, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

and Liset Márquez, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Sunday, August 7, 2016



ONTARIO >> Let's face it, flying out of LA/Ontario International Airport isn't cheap and there's a new report to back that up.

A recent report compared pricing and travel trends in airports across the U.S.; Out of 101 airports, ONT came in 71st place for pricing, dropping 16 spots from 55 ranking in 2015.

Other Southern California airports in the region fared much better than medium-sized Ontario.

The annual [Airport Affordability Index](#) published by cheapflights.com named Long Beach Airport as the No. 1 for offering the most affordable flights in the nation this year, with an average airfare of \$202.

The study looks at the 101 most searched airports on the website and ranks the average airfare users find to the most popular destinations during June, while also comparing fares to the previous year.

Los Angeles International Airport, which came in at 32 in the list, had an average airfare of \$293. Bob Hope Airport came 10 spots behind LAX, at \$311 per average ticket.

ONT's average airfare was \$369.

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URL: <http://www.dailybulletin.com/lifestyle/20160807/where-to-find-the-cheapest-flights-in-southern-california-not-in-ontario>

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ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Woman who had invasive bear killed says backlash is 'disheartening'

By [BEATRIZ VALENZUELA](#)

2016-08-06 19:43:48



FOREST FALLS – A woman whose friend shot and killed a bear for repeatedly breaking into her home is now facing backlash and online threats from members of her small mountain community.

"I haven't regretted my decision at all, but the way the people in this town initially responded was initially disheartening," Julie Faith Strauja said. "I've had death threats and my address posted all over social media."

Strauja moved to Forest Falls on July 1.

A Facebook post Wednesday evening that included Strauja's address read, "Contact me if you want to legally make their life a living hell." The post has since been taken down, but Strauja kept a screenshot of it.

Strauja said, who calls herself an animal lover, said she's fostered 15 dogs over the past year. But concerns for her family's safety prompted her to seek a permit to shoot the bear, if it came to that.

"It had already come into my house Friday night and then again broke into my kitchen early Saturday morning and attacked my dog," she said. "I have my three babies in the house."

Early on the morning of July 31, a day after obtaining the depredation permit from the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Strauja's friend shot the bear after it tried to enter her property a third day in a row, according to Strauja and the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"I understand that people are upset," said Andrew Hughan, Fish and Wildlife spokesman. "We don't want to destroy animals unless we have to. The fact is this bear was inside the residence and had been inside the house several times."

Some say the shooting wasn't necessary.

"I have lived here for seven years and never had a problem with a bear going in (my) house," said Pennie Justin of Forest Falls, who said a less-lethal remedy could have been used.

Justin said she feels, like many in the community, that Strauja should have used less lethal means to get rid of the bear.

"Go to a neighbor. Get in a car. They don't hurt you as long as you leave them alone," Justin said. "My son walks home at 2 o'clock in morning. No problem."

Strauja said she had employed several non-lethal strategies in the days leading up to the fatal shooting, including using mace on the bear and trying to scare it away. On July 30, the day she called and requested the depredation permit, she said, a deputy saw the bear and used bean bag rounds to force it back into the woods.

The permit itself notes that Strauja took measures to prevent the animal from re-entering her property. They included using a padlock and keeping food trash out of the garbage cans.

While several object to the decision to kill the bear, they agree that keeping trash secured and not feeding wild

animals is key to preventing future incidents.

"At the end of the day this is not a bear problem, it's a people problem," Hughan said. "Going forward it's everyone's responsibility to maintain their trash cans and keep their property cleaned up."

There also are those in the community who feed wildlife, which leads to the animals losing their fear of humans.

"It's not legal and it's dangerous if something happens," Hughan said.

In the days following the bear's killing, Strauja said she has received some support from individual residents and neighbors.

"I've had people come by and have real conversations with me and that gave me a little encouragement and hope for the future," she said.

The incident has pushed community leaders to hold a special meeting at 6 p.m. Monday at the Forest Falls Community Center, where members of DFW will discuss how to live with wildlife and which precautions to take. Strauja hopes the meeting will help to continue to de-escalate the situation.

"I know this community, and when tragedies happen they usually pull together," she said. "I hope this will happen here."

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Did you know that San Bernardino's Mexican Consulate is home to a public art gallery?

By Michel Nolan, The Sun

Saturday, August 6, 2016



Sometimes, it's easier to understand a culture without speaking a single word,

Visual arts are like that.

The art exhibition at the Mexican Consulate's Eclipse Gallery is open to the public as a cultural program shared between the United States and Mexico.

This gallery, now in its inaugural year, is a little known gem in San Bernardino.

Gilberto Rendón-Báez, community affairs promoter, said paintings in the gallery comprise just part of the consulate's new cultural project, known as "Paisanos...Origen disimil."

Luis Alderete is the creator of this "Countrymen ... with dis-similar origins" project, whose goal is to share the cultural richness of Mexico with others.

The gallery, located on the second floor of the consulate at Third and D streets, features works by 23 Mexican artists, as well as one guest artist invited from another country.

The guest artist, from the Dominican Republic, will be part of an exhibition with his countrymen and when it concludes, will invite a guest from yet another country to participate, and the exhibits will continue to "pay it forward" throughout the world.

"The gallery will be used for several cultural programs — this is the first year we've had our own space," said Arlahé Galicia Lizárraga, who is also a community affairs promoter.

Work on the calendar has begun.

In May, the gallery was home to San Bernardino's first Art Night exhibit — works by students in the San Bernardino City Unified School District.

Gilberto said he was looking forward to the next community Art Night, which is being planned for October.

Art Night, according to organizers, is seen as a catalyst that will enliven the community and draw residents to downtown.

Most consulate exhibitions will change monthly, and the next exhibit is set for September, according to Gilberto.

Exhibits are free and open to the public.

The consulate still needs to have an "Art Gallery" sign made to make it more visible to the community.

“We are trying to see what else we can do so people can come,” added Gilberto, who previously worked for the consulate in Phoenix, Ariz.

The consulate is also helping to coordinate the Mexican Independence Day celebration Sept. 15 at Cal State San Bernardino, with Folklorico dancers, mariachis and food adding to the festivities.

On Oct. 23, the consulate is planning a health fair, with free medical services and information for everyone attending.

Dr. Ernie Garcia, arts community leader, former Cal State San Bernardino dean of education, and a namesake for the Garcia Center for the Arts in San Bernardino, said that in September the Mexican Consulate also will lend an exhibit to the National Orange Show Gallery.

The revived San Bernardino Art Association has been helping the Mexican Consulate with installations of art exhibits, Garcia said.

“The National Orange Show Gallery, the San Bernardino Art Association and the Mexican Consulate have worked very closely with each other,” he said.

The current Paisanos exhibit is made possible thanks to a collaboration between the Consulate of Mexico in San Bernardino and the City Council of Tijuana Municipal Institute of Art and Culture.

We’ve talked before about how the arts could help revitalize a city — maybe they could even help relationships with neighbors to the south.

Michel Nolan appears in The Sun on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Reach her at mnolan@scng.com or on Twitter @MichelNolan.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/arts-and-entertainment/20160806/did-you-know-that-san-bernardinis-mexican-consulate-is-home-to-a-public-art-gallery>

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Is Prop. 47 working? Depends whom you ask

By [BRIAN ROKOS](#)

2016-08-05 15:20:01



Editor's note: This is one of a three-part series on the effects of Prop. 47. Also read:

- [Prop. 47 giving ex-addict 'another shot at life'](#)
- [30-plus drug citations equal zero felonies, thanks to Prop. 47](#)

The premise behind the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act, or Prop. 47, overwhelmingly approved by California voters in November 2014, was

simple:

Reduce the penalties for non-serious, non-violence offenses such as drug possession and minor theft, and pass along the savings from less-crowded prisons and jails to programs that would reduce recidivism and crime and help victims.

But nothing about Prop. 47 has been simple in the 21 months since then.

As intended, the law has prevented non-violent offenders from serving significant jail terms. But some law enforcement officials firmly believe – and there are equally strong opinions to the contrary – that these offenders are responsible for a documented uptick in crime since the law's passage.

Also as intended, the state's inmate population has been reduced, but the money budgeted from the savings for services in the first year is tens of millions less than expected.

And as offenders whose crimes were reclassified as misdemeanors find new opportunities now that they're no longer felons, other offenders in the system have less incentive to seek rehabilitation through specialty courts. Those who want to help them are left to improvise and cross their fingers that offenders will seek assistance.

So here are six things to know about the law.

WHY IS CRIME UP?

Nothing about Prop. 47 is as contested as much as its effect on crime.

California's violent and property crime rates rose in 2015 – up 8.4 percent and 6.6 percent, respectively, from 2014, a year that saw the lowest crime rates since the 1960s. However, there is disagreement about whether Prop. 47 is responsible and whether the increases were just a blip or the end of a 25-year trend of decreasing crime rates.

In Riverside and San Bernardino counties, the most common crime, larceny, increased more than 10 percent in 2015 over 2014, according to the state Attorney General's Office. Law enforcement officers say these thefts often translate into the purchase of illegal drugs after the stolen property is sold.

Some say suspects who once would have been booked into jail on felony theft or drug charges are instead being written misdemeanor citations and released on the spot, freeing them to commit even more offenses before they show up to court in the original case. Others say there's not enough evidence to draw such a conclusion.

San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon, in his 2015 annual report, wrote: "Recent legislation, such as AB 109 (Realignment to reduce the prison population) and Prop. 47 has significantly impacted public safety and crime rates throughout the state and our region."

But Riverside County Public Defender Steve Harmon isn't making that link.

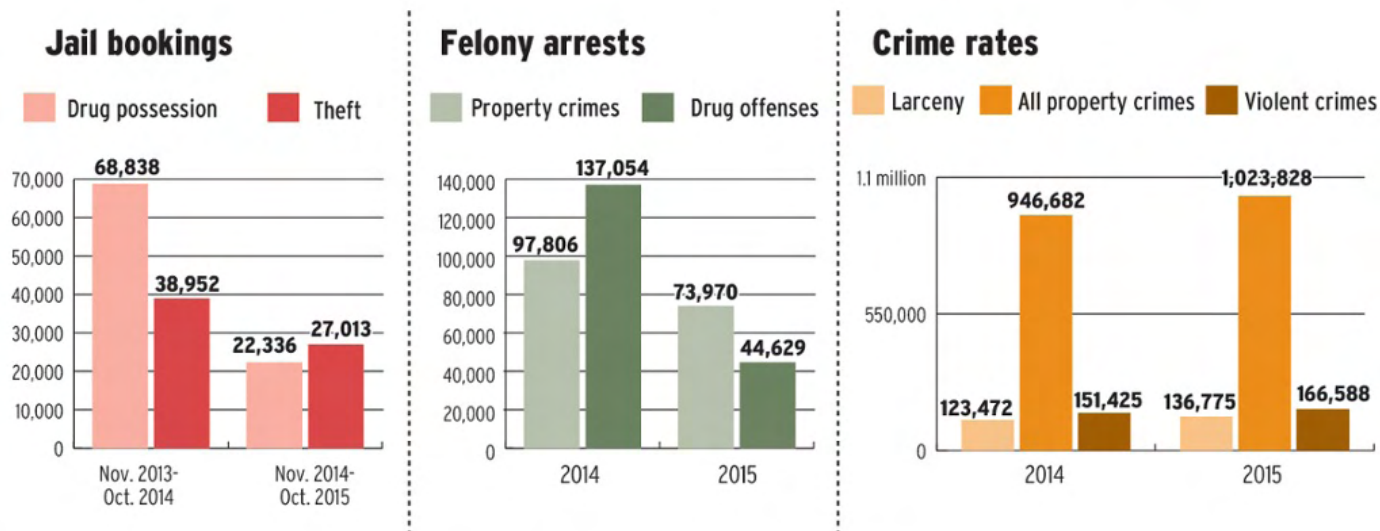
"I have not seen any studies that make a case for a correlation between Prop. 47 and increasing crimes anywhere," Harmon said. "What you'll find is crime statistics go up and down. Whether there is cause and effect, or just two things happening with the stars being aligned, nobody knows."

Brandon Martin, a research associate at the independent Public Policy Institute of California, said he has not seen any such studies either. The organization plans to begin one of its own late this year.

"It's going to be difficult to figure out," Martin said, "but we're going to try."

Changes after Prop. 47

In November 2014, California voters passed Prop. 47, which reduced some felony offenses to misdemeanors and resulted in more suspects being cited and released instead of being booked into jail. At the same time, the number of thefts and violent crimes increased, although there is disagreement on whether Prop. 47 is responsible. Here's a year-over-year comparison of bookings, felony arrests and the number of certain crimes committed.



Sources: Public Policy Institute of California, State Attorney General's Office

STAFF GRAPHIC

WHERE'S THE MONEY?

When Prop. 47 was written, the authors said more than \$100 million saved through an expected reduction in the prison population would be available in the first year to distribute to crime-related programs. In the 12 months since the passage, a Stanford Justice Advocacy Project report said, the population fell by 13,000 inmates.

But, according to the Board of State and Community Corrections, only \$39.4 million will be available in the state budget next spring to be distributed to three categories of beneficiaries: mental health and substance-abuse programs designed to reduce recidivism (65 percent of the total); K-12 truancy and dropout prevention programs (25 percent); and victim services (10 percent).

In a February 2016 report, the independent Legislative Analyst's Office wrote that Gov. Jerry Brown's budget "likely underestimates the savings and overestimates the costs resulting from the measure," and that he should

have budgeted \$100 million more for distribution.

The Board of State and Community Corrections committee in charge of deciding which agencies will receive the money next meets Wednesday and Thursday, Aug. 10-11, in Sacramento to discuss further the types of programs it would like to fund and the rules for agencies receiving the money.

CONVICTS GET RELIEF

Because Prop. 47 applied retroactively, offenders by the tens of thousands whose past crimes were reclassified to misdemeanors have applied for reduced sentences, if they were still in prison, and less-severe criminal records if they were already out.

Freed from the restrictions and rejections that come with a felony record, some offenders are getting a fresh start on life, joining the workforce and reuniting with their families.

“There is story after story about people able to get their jobs back, (and) housing,” said Margaret Dooley-Sammuli, director of the American Civil Liberties Union of California Criminal Justice and Drug Policy. “There are very real, tangible benefits for their families and all of us.”

A person with a felony on his or her record can have difficulty gaining employment, obtaining a professional license and joining the military.

Dooley-Sammuli added that organizations continue to attempt to track down offenders who are eligible for resentencing. She estimated that two-thirds of those eligible have not filed petitions. The deadline to apply is November 2017.

CRIMINALS WISE UP

It’s not just the police, prosecutors and defense attorneys who know the new law. So do the criminals, some who are careful to operate within its boundaries.

McMahon, the San Bernardino County sheriff, said deputies have told him that some theft suspects are pointing out that their hauls are valued at less than \$950, the threshold for the theft becoming a felony.

Harmon, the Riverside County public defender, said some defendants, once convicted, are now asking a judge to impose jail time, instead of simply probation, in misdemeanor cases.

For the defendant, that means serving a short sentence – often just days because of jail crowding – without

having to be supervised later by a probation officer. For law enforcement, it eliminates an important tool: People on probation are subject to searches of themselves and or their property at any time without a warrant. Such searches can yield evidence of crimes, such as stolen property.

A frustrated Riverside County District Attorney Mike Hestrin says there are “no consequences” for misdemeanor offenders.

Dooley-Sammuli, the ACLU director, rejects Hestrin’s contention. She noted that misdemeanors can bring jail time, fines, fees and barriers to obtaining some occupational licenses.

THE ‘FIX’ ISN’T IN

It wasn’t a month after Prop. 47 passed before lawmakers tried to change it, citing unintended consequences of reducing some drug and theft offenses from felonies to misdemeanors. The two crimes that received the most legislative attention were possession of the so-called date rape drug and theft of a firearm.

Critics say the only reasons to possess the drug or steal the gun are to commit felonies.

But most efforts have failed.

AB 46, which would have again made possession of Rohypnol, with the intent to commit sexual assault, a felony, was introduced Dec. 1, 2014, but it died in committee. Gov. Brown later vetoed a similar Senate bill. SB 1182, introduced by state Sen. Cathleen Galgiani, D-Stockton, is the latest attempt. The Committee on Appropriations approved the bill June 15.

In June, Brown vetoed a bill introduced by Assemblywoman Melissa Melendez, R-Lake Elsinore, that would have once again made stealing a firearm a felony punishable by 16 months in prison. The misdemeanor conviction carries up to a year in jail.

Other legislators have introduced similar bills on guns that failed to make the cut.

The drug legislation, critics say, is unnecessary because existing law already provides for felony punishment for the resulting crime. Some have argued that the gun bills were unnecessary because there are enough firearm laws that a prosecutor could find a way to charge a felony.

Legislators also failed to pass bills that would have allowed law enforcement to obtain DNA swabs from defendants convicted of misdemeanors that once were felonies. But there has been at least one success: In July 2015, Brown signed into a law a bill that allows search warrants to be issued for some misdemeanors that used to be felonies.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

Since Prop. 47 took effect, fewer people have been enrolling in specialty drug and mental health courts. They require offenders to complete weeks-long, structured programs that offer counseling and life-skills classes in exchange for the charges being decreased or dismissed – an appealing option to those facing harsh felony penalties, but less appealing to those charged with misdemeanors who will be out of jail within days.

As a result, the drug and mental health courts in Riverside County were consolidated in the past year.

Riverside County Superior Court Judge Becky L. Dugan, who has supervised the court’s handling of the Prop. 47 cases, noted that the court can still refer defendants to outside services such as anger management, parenting, life skills and resume writing.

In San Bernardino County, participation in drug court is down 15-20 percent from pre-Prop. 47 levels, Superior Court spokesman Dennis Smith said, although mental health and veterans courts have largely been unaffected.

Officials aren’t giving up on helping the offenders, however.

Hestrin is forming the Repeat Offender Alternatives and Recidivism Reduction program “to combat the revolving door recidivism created by the passage of Proposition 47,” according to his 2015 year-end report. ROARR will partner with Pacific Educational Services, which provides anger-management, gang-intervention and life-skills programs as well as substance-abuse counseling.

Defendants who complete the voluntary program will be eligible to have their cases dismissed.

"We're building this in the hope and with some optimism that we are going to fix this situation," Hestrin said in an interview. "We are not always going to have a situation in Riverside County where there are no consequences for misdemeanor offenders. What we're really hoping for is ... there will be a percentage of offenders who want to get their lives together."

Contact the writer: brokos@pe.com or 951-368-9569

RELATED:

- [Prop. 47 giving ex-addict 'another shot at life'](#)
- [30-plus drug citations equal zero felonies, thanks to Prop. 47](#)

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Prop. 47 giving ex-addict 'another shot at life'

By [ALI TADAYON](#)

2016-08-05 23:20:16



This is one of a three-part series on the effects of Prop. 47. Also read:

[Is Prop. 47 working? Depends who you ask](#)

[30-plus drug citations equal zero felonies, thanks to Prop. 47](#)

Even with four years of sobriety under his belt and his criminal past behind him, Freddie Harris of Corona still struggles.

A record riddled with felony drug convictions and prison time has made it tough for the 55-year-old to hold down a job, get an education or secure stable housing for him and his family.

But Harris' life took a turn for the better in 2014 with the passage of Prop. 47, which turned certain felonies into misdemeanors. Several of his prior drug-possession convictions from years ago were reclassified as misdemeanors. Harris said he still has felonies on his record from incidents in San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties, and is working to get those reclassified as well.

Harris' cleaner record has given him a new outlook on life. Though he still feels haunted by the mistakes he made in his youth, he believes he is finally able to move in the right direction, toward a higher education, better-paying and less physically demanding work and, ultimately, a better life.

"I'm grateful that I get another shot at life," Harris said. "I have the opportunity to take care of my family and be a better provider, a better man, a better father and a better friend."

What's most important to Harris right now is finding secure employment. Drug addiction, prison time and hard labor has taken a toll on Harris' body. He wants to be able to work a job that's less physically taxing but pays enough to support his family.

Harris is among 3,396 people in Riverside County and 72,624 people statewide who applied between November 2014 and March 2016 to have their felony convictions reclassified as misdemeanors, according to the Judicial Council of California.

Temecula-based defense attorney Mike Donaldson, who frequently works with people seeking to have their felonies reclassified under Prop. 47, said it has "opened a lot of doors" for his clients.

"What we have is an opportunity for people who have committed non-violent, rather non-serious crimes like theft and drug possession able to get prior felonies reclassified and try to rejoin society as a productive members of society," Donaldson said.

ROCKY START

Harris was plunged into the criminal justice system at a young age growing up in Inglewood. Without a stable home life, he said, he started doing drugs at 9 years old. His first prison stint was at 17.

"I was hopeless," Harris said. "Where I come from, I thought I was done."

Throughout his teens and 20s, he was in and out of jail and battled addiction.

After a few failed attempts at getting sober, "something clicked" around 2012, Harris said. With the help of the services offered by Riverside nonprofit Starting Over Inc. and The Hole In Wall recovery center in Moreno Valley, he said, he's been sober ever since.

Court records show Harris has not been charged with any crimes in the past four years in Riverside or San Bernardino counties.

LIFE AS A FELON

Kicking the habit didn't solve all Harris' problems. His felony record made it difficult for him to land a job that was stable and permanent, let alone one that paid well.

Instead, he worked for several temp agencies over the years, mostly doing jobs that taxed his body, such as plastic injection molding, delivering machine parts and building silos.

"I went from job to job; I couldn't hold any jobs," Harris said. "Every day I would go to work thinking, 'Am I going to get fired today?'"

Finding long-term housing was also tough.

"There had been times when we went from motel to motel. We couldn't get an apartment because of my record," Harris said. "It was brutal."

Donaldson said having a felony on your record can forever strip a person of his freedom.

"You can basically be legally discriminated against – you can be denied employment, housing, scholarships and other things," Donaldson said. "A one-time mistake ends up becoming a lifetime punishment," he said.

LOOKING FORWARD

Lenore Anderson was the co-author of Prop. 47 and is the founder and executive director of Californians for Safety and Justice, a nonprofit criminal justice reform organization. She said reclassification can help push people out of the revolving door that sends many ex-cons back to prison.

"Experts in re-entry will tell you that jobs and housing are two of the most important ingredients in getting people stable and out of the criminal justice system," Anderson said

The National Institute of Justice, a research and development branch of the Department of Justice, found in a 2011 study that being employed after getting out of jail "substantially reduced the risk" of going back to jail, and living in a "stable neighborhood" also reduced that risk.

Harris said before 2014, he never thought he would make out of that system.

"I've lost at least half my lifetime," Harris said. "I've worked 25 to 30 jobs and I'm beat up. I'm tired."

His ultimate goal is to go to college so he can get a better job to support his wife and high-school-aged son; he also has an adult daughter. He was able to get some financial aid – which people with criminal records have limited access to – and registered to attend San Bernardino Valley College this fall to pursue a water treatment certificate.

But because of ongoing financial struggles, he's putting off school to focus on keeping the bills paid. He hopes to lock down steady work that's less taxing than some of the tough jobs he's been stuck with.

"There's some guys out there who really need a shot, man," Harris said. "It's a blessing to be where I am now, it truly is."

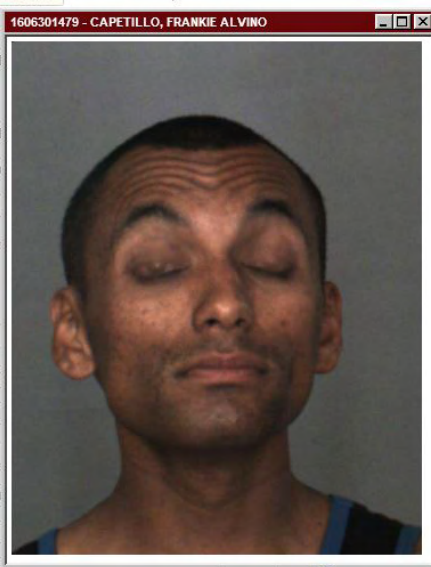
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30-plus drug citations equal zero felonies, thanks to Prop. 47

By [BRIAN ROKOS](#)

2016-08-05 15:25:17



This is one of a three-part series on the effects of Prop. 47. Also read:

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Redlands police officers know Frankie Alvino Capetillo by sight.

They should: They've cited and released him on the spot almost three dozen times, almost all for alleged drug offenses, since Prop. 47 passed on Nov. 4, 2014.

The law reduced many drug and theft offenses that once could have been charged as felonies – bringing longer jail or prison sentences – to misdemeanors that could bring sentences of at most a year in jail but in practice is weeks or days.

For Capetillo, 12 of the citations were for such reclassified offenses. In 11 of those cases, Capetillo failed to show up for his first court date, according to San Bernardino Superior Court records. Even with warrants out for his arrest, Capetillo would be cited by officers and deputies instead of jailed.

For advocates of Prop. 47, Capetillo is precisely the type of offender who should be kept out of jail: someone who is non-violent and who could benefit from services such as substance-abuse counseling.

For others, particularly those in law enforcement, Capetillo, 27, is a prime example of someone who is gaming the system.

'WASTE OF RESOURCES'

On Aug. 24, 2015, Capetillo pleaded guilty to petty theft, a misdemeanor both before and after Prop. 47's passage; thanks to a plea bargain, the accumulated drug charges went away. He was sentenced 30 days in jail – with 30 days' credit for time already served – and 36 months on probation. The judge suspended \$100 of a \$370 fine. Capetillo was free to go.

"It's an absolute waste of resources," said San Bernardino County Chief Deputy District Attorney Simon Umscheid. "Instead of arresting Mr. Capetillo once or twice and putting him up on a felony, they are forced to cite him over and over and over. Frankly, under the new law, these cases are not worth anything anymore."

It's been just under a year since his plea, and Capetillo has been cited at least 10 more times and failed to show for his arraignment in most of those cases, Superior Court records show.

Capetillo, a Redlands resident, couldn't be reached for comment. On Monday, Aug. 1, his mother said her son was out bowling. Capetillo later didn't respond to a request for an interview.

Redlands police Lt. Travis Martinez acknowledged that officers still have the option of booking a misdemeanor suspect into jail instead of citing and releasing him. But in many cases, Martinez said, the jail will simply release the defendant after booking because of a lack of room.

Another barrier to booking is the time it takes – typically at least an hour and a half, Martinez said.

“An hour and a half sitting at the jail is an hour and a half they (officers) are not being proactive, addressing the concerns of the Redlands community,” Martinez said.

LESS INCENTIVE TO REFORM

Martinez was once a department liaison to drug court and fondly remembers seeing graduates of the program becoming productive members of the community. But those defendants often faced felony charges and enrolled in drug court, which in a weekslong program offers structure, counseling and life skills, in exchange for those charges being reduced or dismissed.

“Unfortunately with Prop. 47, they are not getting the court-mandated drug rehab. There is no incentive. A lot of people are just pleading guilty ... They’re not going to face any stiff jail time,” Martinez said.

Margaret Dooley-Sammuli, director of the American Civil Liberties Union of California Criminal Justice and Drug Policy, said reducing some felonies to misdemeanors makes sense because, she said, imprisoning someone on a felony conviction is often “costly, ineffective and counterproductive.” She called on law enforcement to focus on crime prevention and rehabilitation.

Umscheid said he would like to see Prop. 47 modified to apply increasingly strong penalties on convicts who continually reoffend.

Umscheid and Martinez said they believe offenders like Capetillo know how the system can now work in their favor.

“(Offenders) learn quickly that if I continue to commit this offense, there is not the disincentive not to commit it,” Umscheid said.

“In my experience,” Martinez said, “a lot of people don’t get the help unless they’re forced to.”

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Surface Seal Project Planned For Several Crestline Streets Starting August 8

in [News](#), [Ticker](#) / by [Michael P. Neufeld](#) / on August 7, 2016 at 12:03 am /



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Temporary tow-away signs have been posted along numerous streets in Crestline as county crews will be doing road work over the next few days starting Monday, August 8. (Photo by ROTWNEWS.com)

By Michael P. Neufeld

Crestline, CA – On Monday, August 8, the San Bernardino County Department of Public Works will begin a surface seal project on several streets in the Crestline area. The working hours will be from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. according to signs posted on the streets where the work will be done.



The projects — weekdays only — will begin August 8 and conclude on Thursday, August 25. The county does not indicate where crews will be working each day and the posted signage has different start and end dates depending on the neighborhood

CRESTLINE STREETS

Streets scheduled for the surface seal project are: North Road, Wylerhorn Road, Weisshorn Drive, Wabern Drive, Zell Court, Zurich Drive, Zermatt Drive, Wald Court and Wabern Court.



Chip sealing (File Photo)

Residents of those streets should park all vehicles off the roadway, not allow water to run into the roadway, not allow children to play on the roadway and should not place trash cans or other debris on the roadway.

CHIP SEALS

Chip seals are used as the most cost effective treatment to preserve the roadway surface and protect it from harmful oxidation from the sun and weather. The County typically applies a chip seal to roadways to protect the new surface by sealing it, providing a protective layer while rejuvenating dry and weathered asphalt pavement.

Recently revised procedures in the chip seal process that include additional quality control measures, smaller chip size and the application of a fog seal coat have resulted in an improved product.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional roads in the Crestline area will receive a surface seal project, the release added.

For more information visit [PUBLIC WORKS](#) online.

For further questions, please contact the Department of Public Works Operations Division at (909) 387-8063.

(426)



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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Baseball fans pour into San Bernardino for Western Region Little League tournament

Western Region Little League tournament gets underway

By Joe Nelson, The Sun

Sunday, August 7, 2016



DEVORE >> Victor Perez, his two younger brothers and his four nephews made the long haul from Escondido to this rural unincorporated community northwest of San Bernardino on Sunday morning to spend the day watching Little League baseball.

As a boy, Perez, 45, of Borrego Springs, played Little League from age 9 to 12. He went on to play on his high school baseball team as well. He never lost interest in the sport, a family tradition of sorts.

“I’m just a fan. This is my first time in San Bernardino,” said Perez, sitting with his four nephews under a portable canopy erected on the concrete steps of the Albert E. Houghton stadium Sunday afternoon.

“It’s a family affair,” said Perez. “I come just to cheer on the kids. The kids are getting better and better every year. Better training. Better coaches.”

Perez and family were among the thousands of fans expected to stream into Little League Western Region Headquarters on Sunday for the 46th annual Little League Western Regional Baseball Tournament, which concluded with an evening opening ceremony before the Northern California and Southern California teams faced off for the day’s highlight event.

Perez said he and his family arrived to the ballfield about 8 a.m., just in time to catch the first game of the day: Hawaii versus Nevada. Hawaii won 8-0. Then they checked out the second game, Montana versus Alaska, which Montana won 10-2.

Shielded from the hot sun but braving the heat nonetheless, Perez and his nephews were awaiting the third game at 4 p.m.: Wyoming versus Washington.

“It brings me back — just to see the kids play,” said Perez. “The home runs. The plays. The double plays. All of that is exciting.”

Perez’s nephew, Rudy Baay, said it’s almost as much fun watching the game as it is playing.

“It’s fun to watch the other states play and see what they’re doing,” said Baay, 13, of Escondido.

Perez’s other nephews — Jacob Baay, 11, of Escondido, Aaron Lopez, 14, and Andres Lopez, both of La Quinta — also play in either Little League or Pony League.

Twelve teams from 11 states, with California having two teams (Northern California and Southern California) will compete through Aug. 13, with the top team moving on to play in the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

A slew of retired professional baseball players, including former L.A. Dodgers pitcher Fernando Valenzuela and Kevin Gross, former pitcher for the Philadelphia Phillies, Montreal Expos, and L.A. Dodgers, will be attending the tournament on different days to throw out the first pitch and sign autographs, said Western Region Little League Assistant Director Brian Pickering.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department's 40 King helicopter was scheduled to do a flyover during Sunday's opening ceremony to welcome players, their families, and fans, to the event.

Western Region Director David Bonham said the special thing about opening day is it provides an opportunity for everyone to get to know one another and to acknowledge and congratulate all the teams on making it as far as they have.

Of course, it's a lot of fun as well.

"The energy is felt on the field and off the field at these games," Pickering said.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/sports/20160807/baseball-fans-pour-into-san-bernardino-for-western-region-little-league-tournament>

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Commentary: Where's the Passion for CEQA Reform?

By Kerry Jackson.

The roots of California's environmental regulations can be traced back to 1884. That's the year a federal judge ordered miners to stop using water cannons to batter the Sierra hillsides to separate gold from the soil and rock, but also left behind a broken and ugly landscape.

The process, called hydraulic mining, had devastating effects. The water-sediment slurry it produced was flushed into rivers and streams, causing a surge that bruised and grated everything in its way. Property rights were violated downstream when the gravel, sand and other debris buried farms, and towns were flooded when collected sediment rendered waterways too shallow. Rivers and streams became unnavigable, and the environmental impacts were appalling, as fish-rich waters were contaminated and large chunks of mountainsides were scoured away.

California environmental laws and regulations have since gone from legitimate restrictions protecting property rights and heading off ecological ruin to overbearing edicts that have consumed businesses in the state and dragged down the economy. The worst of them, maybe even the worst in the entire country, is the California Environmental Quality Act, known to both those who wield it like a club and those who are its victims as CEQA.

Passed in 1970 just months after the federal Environmental Protection Agency was created, and signed by then-Gov. Ronald Reagan, the stated aim of the law was simply to require "state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible," according to the California Natural Resources Agency.

But the law has, as laws will, become an unbearable yoke. A [Pacific Research Institute report](#) noted that "the general policy of CEQA" now "constitutes a broad endorsement of the primacy of the environment over all other values."

Simply put, CEQA is one of the biggest hurdles developers and business owners face. Michael Haley, one-time president of a Napa Valley taxpayers group, said a few years ago in the [Napa Valley Register](#) that "everyone who works on CEQA plans know that it is mostly a pile of paperwork that does little to help the environment."

"Every project that comes up for development is immediately hamstrung by CEQA regulations," said Haley. "Something as simple as planting two new acres in a vineyard, something that is supposed to be easily allowable in Napa County, can involve literally books and books of descriptions of possible impacts and mitigations."

It's not unheard of for projects to be delayed or even abandoned because developers can't afford the legal costs of the CEQA lawsuits they have to deal with.

CEQA has not only become a weapon of abuse for radical environmentalists, it's become an effective tool for unions, too. They flood projects with lawsuits over environmental issues then drop the suits when developers surrender to their labor contract demands, which typically means more union workers on the job. This

“greenmail” of course drives up cost of development.

Having trouble with CEQA is not unique to Republicans and conservatives. Jennifer Hernandez, a Democrat, California League of Conservation Voters board member, environmental attorney and partner at Holland & Knight, considers the law to be a drain on California. She says that [litigation abuse](#) based on the law has undermined “the state’s environmental, climate, social equity and economic priorities.”

“I believe that ending CEQA litigation abuse is the most cost-effective way to restore the state’s middle-class job base, make housing more affordable, ensure that taxpayer funds on critical infrastructure needs like transportation are spent on projects instead of endless process,” Hernandez wrote in The Planning Report, “and improve the future of the nearly 9 million Californians living in poverty.”

Hernandez offers some points for reform, but maybe the worst part of this whole CEQA saga is that there is no hard – or even halfhearted – charge to repeal or at least extensively overhaul it.

Yes, some vague comments have been made about modifying the law. Brown said four years ago that “[CEQA reform is the Lord’s work](#),” and various lawmakers, many of them Democrats, have since then talked around the edges of change. More recently, Democratic Assemblyman Kevin McCarty has [introduced a bill](#) that would speed the process on some building projects.

But there’s no real enthusiasm for reform, probably because there is so much resistance to it from entrenched interests, from environmental groups, to unions, to businesses that want to place hurdles in front of their competitors. Political opposition shouldn’t stop lawmakers from doing the right thing, though, especially when California’s future is at stake.

Kerry Jackson is a Fellow at the California Center for Reform at the Pacific Research Institute.